

suspect it may ultimately prove identical with *G. chiriquensis*, though there are discrepancies in the descriptions. Still, when such delicate bronze-colours have to be spoken of, it is hardly likely that two writers should call the same tint by the same name. The Chiriqui bird is somewhat larger (wings 5·9 inches instead of 5·5 inches); but not having specimens of either before us, we cannot decide the point.

In the 'Proceedings of the Boston Society of Natural History' (vol. ix. pp. 368, 369), our friend Dr. Bryant describes, under the name of *littoralis*, a new variety of *Parus hudsonicus* from Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, and has some "Remarks on the genus *Galeoscoptes* of Cabanis," from which he proposes to remove *Turdus rubripes* of Temminck and *Turdus plumbeus* of Linnæus, raising, for the benefit of the former, Mr. Sclater's subgenus *Mimocichla* into a genus, and relegating the latter to a new genus, which he calls "*Mimokitta*," or, as we should prefer to write it, *Mimocitta*. Dr. Bryant gives a very detailed account of the peculiarities of these genera, as well as a description of the *Mimocitta plumbea*, which, except by Catesby, he says has never before been accurately done.

X.—*Letters, Announcements, &c.*

The following letters, addressed "To the Editor of 'The Ibis,'" have been received:—

Takow, Formosa, 1 July, 1865.

SIR,—My report for last month need not be a long one. Early in June a photographer from Amoy, Mr. Edwards, returned from a visit to the neighbouring mountains with some photographs of the Kalee savages, which I have forwarded to the Geographical Society. He also brought a skin of *Urocissa cærulea*. This, which he informed me was a common species, is identical with the bird of the Tamsuy vicinity. * * * At the commencement of the month both *Dicrurus macrocerus* and *Zosterops simplex* had young ones flying about. Most birds here breed twice in the year, some few three times; Kites, however, only once; but more of this hereafter.

The heat, duty, and the damp state of the weather, all unite to keep me from wandering far into the country; but I have native assistants at work.

A man I sent lately to the mountains succeeded in procuring me a Green Dove. Much to my delight, it was the long-wished-for male. I had founded the species on a single female specimen procured at Taiwanfoo in 1861, where I had only seen one other example (Ibis, 1863, p. 396). It is a mountain species, coming down, as the natives of the interior report, in summer to feed on the berries of a particular tree. This male confirms my view as to the specific value of the bird, though it is closely allied to *Sphenocercus sieboldi* (Temm.). I will now describe my specimen:—

Sphenocercus formosæ, ♂. Length about 13.75 inches; wing 7.25; tail 5.75, much wedged, the outermost feathers being 1.75 in. shorter than the middle ones. Head and neck fine grass-green, greenish-yellow on the throat and breast, the base of each feather being leaden-white. Belly and under tail-coverts pale primrose-yellow. Axillaries and under tail-coverts fine lead-colour. Flanks and vent broadly striped and banded with leaden-green, which colour also marks the bases of the under tail-coverts and their stems. Upper plumage dull green, back and rump washed with lead-colour. On the shoulders a large patch of dull maroon or madder. The remaining wing-coverts and tertiaries green, more or less marked on their concealed parts with leaden-black. Quills black, faintly edged with green; a few of the secondaries and the bordering coverts more broadly edged with primrose and green. The two middle rectrices pointed and green above, the next pair with a faint black bar, which becomes larger on each successive pair as the outermost is approached, in which the green is scarcely perceptible. Beneath, the rectrices are black, with ashy-grey tips. Bill and legs as in the female.

The same man also brought me a pair of young Tiger-Bitterns (*Gorsachius goisagi*) alive. I tried to keep them, offering them flesh and soaked bread, on which food the Chinaman said he had kept them for several days. They must, however, have been half-starved when they arrived; for they soon died. It is

see p 311

= *J. coromand*

Swinh

2 sp.

a pity I did not try them with fish at first. Their cry was almost exactly that of a Duck. Their plumage differed entirely from that described by Bonaparte in the 'Conspectus Avium.' Indeed I think he must have confounded the young with the old bird. The adult I got some time ago (Ibis, 1865, p. 359) ✓ had a chestnut head, while both these immature specimens have black heads. Can there be more than one species of this abnormal Ardeine? Mr. Blyth, I see, identifies (Ibis, 1865, p. 38) the *Ardea melanolopha* of Raffles with the Japanese ✓ bird. If they are the same, the range of the species must extend from Ceylon to Japan. I procured one adult bird in Tamsuy, and another here; but as I have sent them both home, I cannot speak with certainty on the subject. The two nestlings I have just procured are nearly full-grown. They were taken, with their mother, from a tree at the foot of the inland mountains; but, unfortunately, the parent did not reach me. At a subsequent time I will endeavour to clear up the matter, and content myself now with giving a short description of the young birds:—

Gorsachius goisagi (young nearly full-grown). Bill lead-colour, with a yellowish tinge, blacker on the culmen and near the tip. 403
Coronal and occipital feathers fine black, with white spots and streaks, those of the front having brown edges. Upper parts brown, undulated, spotted, and variegated with light reddish-brown, these markings being pale on the wing-coverts; lower large winglet chestnut, tipped with white, and mottled with black towards the tip, the outward feather being almost entirely black, except its broad white tip. Upper winglet black, tipped with white. Quills black, broadly tipped with white, which is mottled more or less with brown—some of the feathers being reddish near the white, and mottled with brown. Tail black. Throat white; lower part of the neck light reddish ochre, undulated and mottled with blackish-brown. Rest of the under plumage white, undulated with blackish-brown, and variegated with light yellowish-brown. Legs bright yellowish-green; soles and hinder part of tarsus yellow; claws pale.

So much for June!

I am, &c.,

ROBERT SWINHOE.

Oakfield, Reigate, Oct. 1865.

SIR,—Having read with much interest Captain F. W. Hutton's Notes in the last number of 'The Ibis' (for July 1865), "On some of the Birds inhabiting the Southern Ocean," I observe that he remarks (p. 280), with respect to the Albatros (*Diomedea exulans*), "It is more difficult to collect sufficient evidence of their rarity from November to March, as few voyagers visit the regions they inhabit at this season, and fewer still take notice of the birds." Upon this hint I venture to send you a few remarks, based on my own observations during a voyage from Pernambuco round Cape Horn to Valparaiso, in December 1855 and January 1856.

No doubt Albatroses are comparatively scarce in mid-ocean at this season of the year; for, as nearly as I can recollect, we did not fall in with the first until nearly 45° S., and that was a Sooty Albatros (*D. fuliginosa*)—a species which appeared to be both scarcer and far more wary than *D. exulans*. From the latitude above mentioned the latter were our constant companions, and we seldom had fewer than twenty to thirty round the ship—a tolerable number considering that this was the height of the breeding-season. The captain of the good clipper 'Atrevida,' who had doubled both Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope some score of times, informed me that Albatroses ranged further north in the Eastern than in the Western Atlantic.

On the 4th of January 1856 we ran, under a favourable wind, through the Straits of Lemaire, between Staten Land and Tierra del Fuego, rounded the Horn in about 59° 30' S., and in rather less than a fortnight after leaving the latitude of Stanley, Falkland Islands, were safely moored in Valparaiso. Such a rapid run was naturally most unfavourable to Albatros-catching, and our success with hook and line was *nil*. Our efforts to procure specimens by firing at the birds and attempting to drop them on deck were equally unavailing. I could not, therefore, identify any specimens of *D. melanophrys*; but, although many of the birds we saw were much marked with brown, and smaller than some of the snowy-white examples we met with further south, I imagine they all belonged to *D. exulans*. Neither could I identify *D. brachyura*; but on a later occasion, between Valpa-

raiso and Callao, in about 15° S., I noticed an Albatros which was certainly not *D. exulans*.

As Captain Hutton's remarks show, the Albatros "sits down to dinner;" and I have seldom read a more graphic description than that (p. 282) of its settling down in the water. Quite agreeing with his observations respecting the non-diving and non-fishing propensities of this bird, I am sorry to say that my experience entirely differs from his with regard to the habits of the Albatros being quite diurnal. I can of course give no account of its movements during *dark* nights; but, both by moonlight and afterwards in the summer twilight of the Antarctic Seas, I have watched these noble birds come sweeping up out of space, wheel over the main-truck, and then, without a flap of their huge wings, drop away beyond the reach of vision. Mingled with the Albatroses were some of a large dark Petrel, though the latter always kept astern of the ship, and, from their sooty hue,

" Like devils of the pit they seemed
Mid holy cherubim."

But here I must stop; for if I attempt to give any further description of these moonlight nights, some of the pleasantest of my life, I shall begin to rhapsodize, and give Captain Hutton cause to think that the night-flights of the Albatros are all "moonshine."

I have little to say about other birds of the Southern Ocean. Cape Pigeons (*Daption capensis*) were duly caught, and as duly converted into "sea-pie;" foolish birds! they came further north than the Albatroses, and met the ship before we caught the gale which gave us such a rattling run. When far south, I observed a silvery-grey Petrel, which was, I presume, *Procellaria glacialis*, but I did not capture any examples. Of the common Storm- and the Fork-tailed Petrels I have taken many in the North Atlantic, by means of stout threads left to trail from the taffrail, with a double knot, or just the least bit of "sennit" at the end, to act as a catch, when the birds become entangled in their flight in the wake of the vessel.

I trust that Captain Hutton's paper will draw forth some observations from other voyagers, especially with respect to the

abandonment of the young Albatros without any *apparent* means of subsistence from March until October.

I remain, Sir,

Yours obediently,

HOWARD SAUNDERS.

Dobroyde, New South Wales,

21 October, 1865.

SIR,—Having lately had Mr. Gould's 'Birds of Australia' before me, I wish to make a few further remarks on the species of *Pardalotus*.

The bird figured on plate 39 (vol. ii.) is undoubtedly the common Sydney species, namely *P. affinis*. In that district it annually arrives during the month of August, in company with *P. punctatus*. I have besides shot specimens of the same species on the Bogan and Bell rivers, at Goulburn, Braidwood, and Liverpool, where I also procured the variety with deep orange tips to the spurious wing-feathers. Further, I have received it from Port Denison, along with *P. melanocephalus*.

The species figured on plate 38, *P. striatus*, I have never known to occur near Sydney, and was much surprised at finding it breeding at Cardington. But I have several times received specimens of it from South Australia, where, I am informed, it is very common. This species has the outer webs of the *third to the seventh* primaries, inclusive, white, and the tips of the spurious wings deep orange. *P. affinis* sometimes has the tips of the spurious wings light orange or yellow, and sometimes deep orange, as I have before mentioned (*Ibis*, 1865, p. 298), but never more than the *third* primary white on the outer edge.

1868 119 I have recently met with a colony of *P. affinis* breeding under circumstances similar to that of *P. punctatus*, which I before described—namely in a batch of nests of *Chelidon ariel*, under the eaves of a house at Springfield near Goulburn. They were not at all disturbed by the return of the rightful owners, but continued to breed in company with them. Mr. M. Faithful informs me that the Pardalotes arrive every year a few weeks before the Martins, and betake themselves to such of the nests of the latter as have not been knocked down. These they line

Martins

1868

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afresh with grass and hair, and, laying four roundish white eggs, begin to breed.

This species of Pardalote I have also frequently found breeding in the hollow boughs of the *Eucalypti*. *P. punctatus* and *P. melanocephalus* are the only species I know of that pick out for themselves holes in the ground; having there hollowed a long narrow chamber large enough, they line it with fine shreds of stringy-bark and the like. The eggs of *P. melanocephalus* are larger than those of any of the others; but all are white, and usually ovate.

In the last part of my "Notes on Birds breeding in the neighbourhood of Sydney" (*Ibis*, 1865, p. 299), the paragraphs headed *Chelidon arborea* should refer to *C. ariel*; and in the footnote on page 298, the word "orange" in line 5 from the bottom should be "yellow."

I am, &c.,

EDWARD P. RAMSAY.

28 Wellington Street, Woolwich,
November 18th, 1865.

SIR,—In the last number of 'The Ibis' you inquire if any of your readers have ever seen a Skua in the act of swimming. I beg leave, in reply, to inform you that I have seen one species, *Stercorarius parasiticus*, several times so doing, and have a specimen now by me which was shot while swimming in the Thames, about two miles below Woolwich, in October 1864.

I am, &c.,

H. WHITELY.

9 December, 1865.

SIR,—A short time since, on looking over some skins which were on sale at Mr. Stevens's in Bloomsbury Street, I observed an immature specimen of *Hypotriorchis concolor*, which he informed me had been brought from the Zambesi River by Dr. Kirk. As this species is not included in either of the lists of the birds of that region published in 'The Ibis' for 1864, and as also I have never before seen it from any locality south of the Equator, I think it well to record the fact.

1869
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The specimen above mentioned, which I have placed in the Norwich Museum, is in immature plumage, resembling *H. eleonora* at the same age, and *H. subbuteo* in the mature dress; a few grey feathers, however, are visible, indicating that the assumption of the adult plumage had just commenced.

To the skin was attached a ticket, of which the following is a copy:—

“Eats dragonflies, grasshoppers, &c. Flies like a Swallow in the evening. Tarsus yellow; iris brown. Elephant Marsh, 1/63.”

I am, &c.,

J. H. GURNEY.

✓
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Following quickly on the discovery of remains of the Rodriguez Didine bird, mentioned in our last volume (p. 551), has come news of a still more interesting discovery in the neighbouring island of Mauritius. Mr. George Clark, a gentleman living at Mahébourg, near the site of the old Dutch town of Grand Port, has had the good fortune to find a large number of bones of the true Dodo (*Didus ineptus*) in the mud of a small mere, called the “Mare aux Songes,” which has been lately drained. These he has sent to England; and they include almost every portion of the bird’s skeleton. The most perfect series has been transmitted to Professor Owen, by whom they will be described in the ‘Transactions of the Zoological Society.’ The next perfect set is, thanks to Mr. Clark, in our own possession, and the remainder, which also passed through our hands, are shortly to be disposed of by Mr. Stevens, the well-known natural-history agent. An examination of these bones most decidedly confirms Professor Reinhardt’s view of the Columbine *affinities* of the Dodo; but, for all that, it may well be that the *Dididæ* formed an order of themselves. A more wonderful structure than the Dodo’s skeleton it is not easy for the ornithologist to conceive!